

THE MEAT AND DRINK OF THE NEW NATURE

NO. 1460

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“For My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed.”
John 6:55.

WE know that the Savior spoke of spiritual, not carnal things, and He spoke of Himself not as being in any sense meat for our bodies—that could not be—but as being food for our souls. This statement is very plain to us, but those who heard it at the first found it very difficult to understand. Nor need we wonder, for men of the schools who play with letters, words, and phrases, frequently meet with difficulties where none exist. The Jews of our Lord’s Day had fallen into the foolish habit of taking words to pieces and dwelling upon the syllables and letters until they seemed to have lost all power of getting at the plain meaning which ordinary language was intended to convey. They blinded their own eyes with the pretense of superior wisdom; made puzzles and riddles out of plain words; raised a lot of dust and sat down in it blinded to the end. Our God has taught us more and given us to understand more clearly, for His Holy Spirit has given us back the childlike spirit so that we are willing to see the natural sense which words were meant to reveal. Now we see great force and clear expressiveness in that very language which seemed before to conceal the Savior’s meaning. It was a veil to the Jews and they saw not—it is an instructive parable to us, which instead of hiding the truth of God, shadows it out to us and softens the light for our weak eyes. We see, I fear, even now but dimly, for our spiritual sight is scarcely clear as yet, but we see, blessed be God for that, and we see Jesus and something of His loving meaning. We do more than see—we enjoy and therefore know to the life what it is to feed upon His flesh, which is meat indeed and to drink His blood, which is drink indeed.

We cannot attempt to explain the deep mysteries of our text, but rather, as the swallow touches the brook with his wing and is away again, we will glance at these crystal waters of this sacred truth and then up and away. The text teaches us, first, *what Christ must be to us*. We shall consider, secondly, *what is bound up in this*. And thirdly, *what reflections naturally arise out of it*.

I. WHAT CHRIST MUST BE TO US. The answer from the text is, He must be our meat and drink. He must be everything to us—the one thing needful, the indispensable, necessary all-sufficient supply. He must be the source of strength, the support of life, and we must feel Him to be so. He must, to come back to the figure, be meat and drink to us. Our Lord in speaking to the Jews was doubtless thinking of the paschal lamb and of the time when Israel came out of Egypt—when they not only had the blood of the lamb sprinkled upon their houses for their security, but the lamb itself within them as their sustenance. They sat down to feed upon it before they enjoyed the fullness of redemption by passing out of Egypt from under the bondage of Pharaoh. They did not understand that symbol and they little knew what our great Lord and Master meant when He employed it to set forth Himself and said, “My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ must be to us, then, our *spiritual* meat and drink. What do we mean by that?

First, that *the doctrine of God incarnate must be the food of our souls*. Brethren, we have no doubt as to the true and proper deity of our Lord Jesus. We have long since passed out of the region of controversy about that for He has been God to us in the work of salvation and in the new creation which we have experienced through His power. We have, moreover, no doubt about His humanity, but we do not usually dwell enough upon it. We are bound to adore His deity, but we must not forget that He is as truly man as if He were not God and as much a brother to us as if He were not the Son of the Highest. Jesus is assuredly man. Now feed on this. The man Christ Jesus heads up a new race—as the first Adam headed up the race of old and was our federal head to stand or fall for us and we were to stand or fall in him—so is there now a new head who brings us up from the ruin of the first Adam’s fall and puts us into a new po-

sition before the living God. There is a man who has redeemed us. There is a man who has made all the men in Him well-pleasing to God. There is a man who represents manhood in perfection in the glory above. There is a man in whom all believers are—even as we read that Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Melchisedec met him. We are in Christ and we now stand before the eternal throne in that blessed representative man. Feed on this doctrine. Jesus is a real man, though clothed with all power He is God and yet He is the mirror of tenderness. He rules all things and yet is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. You must believe this and you must receive it—and you must rest upon it—otherwise you have no life in you. Some try to turn this fact into a myth, but it is no parable or figure of speech, for the Christ who spoke these words was there before them—one whom they had often seen eat and drink. He spoke of Himself with His own lips and was not a phantom or apparition, but a solid existence of flesh and blood. So then, it is upon the historical Christ, whose existence is a matter of fact, that my soul must feed as I believe Him to be both human and divine.

But this is not all—*the food to be fed upon is not merely God incarnate, but Christ suffering*. Notice that He puts it, “My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed”—when the flesh and the blood are mentioned separately, death is implied. The two being divided and being named together in one connection are the token and emblem of our Savior’s vicarious sacrifice. We also (I am speaking of the brethren worshipping here) have long ago passed beyond the region of controversy as to the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord. If it is not so, then is our preaching vain and our hope is also vain and we are yet in our sins. We have no hope of eternal life save that which begins, centers, and ends in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. “This man, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God”—that is our sole hope. *He has made expiation for sin—*

*“He bore, that we might never bear,
His Father’s righteous ire.”*

We are now to build up our souls by feeding upon the suffering, the crucified, the dead, the buried Christ, as having stood as our representative and as having endured death in our place. You cannot obtain comfort apart from this if you have felt the weight of sin. And you cannot continue happy apart from this great historical fact if you are conscious of sin. Fly, my hearers, into the wounds of Jesus and like doves, you shall find shelter in that rock, but with eager wings you may glide over the waste of human thought without finding a rest for the soles of your weary feet till you light upon the truth of the great substitution. “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,” is the first bell of heaven’s marriage peal—and the second has an equally sweet note of its own—“Christ died for our sins.” Ring them both often. Listen to them as they sound forth, “God *with* us, Christ *for* us.” Incarnation, substitution—was there ever better meat and drink for a hungry soul? This surely satisfies the desire of the most hungry spirit—“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

I have, as it were, in those few words set out the delicacies of the feast. But now I would have you note that our Lord must be to us meat and drink—and *meat is not intended to look at, but to feed on*. I heard the other day that in a certain Socinian place of worship they have gone the length of setting the bread and wine on the table for the people to look at, but they suppose that it is quite unnecessary that they should actually eat and drink. It is fittingly done of them—that is consistent with their creed. They have no Christ to feed upon. There is nothing in their belief which could feed the soul of a mouse, if a mouse had a soul. Why should they attempt to feed the people in figure when really they have no incarnate God or atoning Savior? If it is true that in one of their places of worship they have exhibited the bread and wine instead of handing it out to be eaten, it is remarkably typical of their bloodless, lifeless gospel. Their Christ who is no deity; their Jesus who is no sacrifice for sin. How can the soul find food there? But we must beware lest we ourselves should ever rest content with merely glancing at Christ and not partaking of Him. What is to be done with food, with meat and drink? It is to be received. Food on the table does not nourish. It must be taken into the hand. The cup on the board will never cheer—it must be lifted—it must be appropriated. I know that many of you have, by a humble but brave faith, appropriated Christ as He is set before you in the gospel. He has bid you come and eat and you have come pressed by a sore famine that was in your soul. You have come and you have said, “He is mine,” and you have taken Him to yourselves by simple childlike confidence in Him. You have well done—continue to do the same. “As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in Him.” Go on re-

ceiving Him. "To whom coming," says the apostle, "as unto a living stone." Regard Him not as one to whom you have come by one act and have done with Him, but as one to whom you come continually. "Of His fullness have all we received and grace for grace," but we are going on receiving by continuing to believe in Him. Hold on to this. Having begun in the spirit, do not hope to be perfected by the flesh. Do not think that you are to be fed afterwards on something other than Christ, but go on receiving, appropriating, and taking home the great truths concerning your Lord. Here, my brethren, is the life of your faith. But even appropriating is not enough to constitute feeding. After taking the morsel, it is put into the mouth and received inwardly—the draught of wine is poured into the throat and it disappears. Receive truth not only as a matter of creed, but drink it in as the ox sucks in the water when he stands up to his knees in the pool. Take Christ into your very soul—into your *heart's* belief as well as into your mind's belief. Mental beliefs shift and change, but the inward soul's belief never alters. I reckon that we know nothing rightly till we have absorbed it and made it part and parcel of ourselves. The vital truths with regard to our Lord Jesus must go down into the inward parts of the soul, as the food descends into the secret parts of the belly to feed the entire man.

And you know what becomes of the food. It is taken up by the nature itself and becomes transmuted into it. After its digestion, it passes through various processes and ultimately becomes the life-blood out of which is built up nerve, muscle, sinew, bone, flesh, heart. Everything comes of it. Now, you must so believe in Jesus that no longer is it a matter of question with you whether you will retain Him or not, for if you have inwardly received Him, you cannot lose Him forever. Oh, that blessed "*Quis separabit?*"—"Who shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" It is difficult to deprive a person of that which he has received mentally, for facts learned in childhood are remembered even to old age. No one could compel another to forget, but yet without such compulsion the memory might relax its hold through lapse of years—the mind might part with that which it has received, but no known power could take away from a man that which he has eaten and assimilated. A person may very readily pick my pocket of my wallet, but what I ate yesterday he cannot steal. That is mine—it is joined to myself and has built me up. I do not know what portion of my flesh comes of my morning meal or of my mid-day repast, but there it is and there it must be. It has entered into me and never can be taken away from me. So when the soul takes in Christ's truth with that simple childlike faith which is the mouth, the truth goes into the soul and is thought over, trusted in, delighted in and becomes so part and parcel of the inner consciousness and of the new nature of the man that it would be utterly impossible to tear away that truth from him. Pound a true Christian in a mortar and every single atom would say, "I belong to Christ." Grind him finer than the smallest dust of the threshing floor and every minute particle would still say, "Christ is in me." For so it is that the Christ has entered the man, permeated his nature, become his very life and now it is, "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." Now is the text fulfilled in us, "For you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory." "Abide in Me," said our Lord and He gave His own promise to be with us forever. That is the result of eating Christ and to this we must come. Beloved, I have thus explained the matter as well as I can, but as old Rollock says, "The only way to understand feeding upon Christ is to feed upon Christ." This is a practical, personal, experiential business. In learning certain acts you must yourself become a practical scholar, the master cannot teach by merely setting the copy—the scholar must imitate it line by line with his own hand—and so here I can teach little by words only, you must practice what is spoken. Now feed on the Lord Jesus. Let each one of you do it. I know what some will do—they will not feed on Christ, but they will pick over the heavenly bread like dainty folks who have no stomach for their meat. This bit of Christ they would have, but the other does not suit their taste—justification by faith they would have, but not sanctification—they do not like that. It is a whole Christ you and I must have—a whole Christ as to every part of His teaching, character, work, and offices. We must receive Him into ourselves without division, rejoicing to take Him just as He is. Especially must we receive the spirit of Christ, for, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of His." We must partake in the loving spirit, the self-denying spirit, the generous spirit which lives not within itself, but goes forth in forgiveness of injuries and in seeking to benefit all mankind. We must have Jesus in us, delighting to take in the whole of Him, for He says farther on in this very chapter, "He

that eats *Me*”—that is even more comprehensive than His, “flesh and His blood”—“He that eats *Me*, even he shall live by *Me*.” The entire Christ must be taken into the soul to build up the inner man.

II. Now, secondly, WHAT IS BOUND UP IN THIS EATING OF HIS FLESH AND DRINKING OF HIS BLOOD? Here we will take you back to the context.

And notice, first, that there is, for this eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ, such an essential necessity that *he who has not so eaten and drank has no spiritual life at all*. It is a strong word, “Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, *you have no life in you*.” He does not mean that they have no natural life—He is speaking about spiritual things. Some that are as foolish as Judaizers in the matter of sticking to the letter tell us that this means existence and that no man’s eternal existence is certain except that of a believer in Christ. That dogma is not taught here, certainly. Our Lord is not speaking of existence—He is speaking of a far higher thing than existence, namely, *life*. Have you ever learned the difference between death and non-existence and between life and existence? If you have not, you are babes in understanding and you will often be blundering and losing your way in the midst of texts of Scripture. A man may exist in everlasting death, as, alas, all who die unbelievers must do, but blessed is he who lives! Blessed is he who shall live forever! Let me repeat the word “lives”—I did not say “exists.” What a glorious thing is life. Yet, if I had to explain to you what life is, I might find it far easier by some action of my own to show that I lived than to tell you exactly what life is. He, however, who eats Christ has life. He who has not done so has not life. Do you understand this—that unless you have received Christ by faith into your souls you have no life? You can work, you can walk, you can speak—you have all sorts of natural life—but you have not the life everlasting of which Jesus speaks. The life of God is not in you. You are dead and what a frightful condition that is—and to what greater horror does it lead! For wherever there is death, the dead thing will go a stage farther on. And what is that stage? Corruption! It only leaves a corpse alone long enough and it must corrupt. Flesh corrupts necessarily. Already there are some signs of corruption about every ungodly man—outward sin and especially the inward sin of rejecting Christ are grievous corruptions. Your worm has begun to devour, even the worm that never dies. Then will be reached another stage, for corruption must be cast into the fire. For utter rottenness, the end must be burning. O sinner, your fire has begun to burn—the fire that will never be quenched—for sin is the kindling of hell. It is an awful thing to abide in death and yet he that believes not on Christ is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God. It is enough to make you spring from your seats, O you that are unbelievers, to think that you are not waiting to be tried—you are condemned already. This is not a state of probation, as I often hear it said. Your probation is past. You are condemned already because you have not believed on the Son of God—and death is now upon you. The sentence has already begun to take effect and it will go on to the consummation of corruption till at last the Lord shall say, “Bury My dead out of My sight,” and you must be driven from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. There is no life in you unless you have received Christ. Will you think of this, you thinkers? Only think of your being dead. Will you think of this, you ceremonialists to whom the outward baptism and the outward Lord’s Supper and the church attendance and the chapel going are everything? Unless you have fed on Christ there is no life in you.

Then comes, in the next place, the further truth, namely, that *all who have received Jesus Christ to be to them their meat and drink have eternal life*. “Whoso eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life.” I do not know how our brethren who doubt the final perseverance of the saints manage to escape from the plain teaching of the text. There are always ways of getting over everything—you can drive a coach and six they say through any form of human language. But it does seem to me that if I have eternal life I must eternally live and cannot possibly die. If I have got eternal life—if words mean anything—I am an eternally saved man. If I have received Jesus Christ into my soul, I have the life in me which will no more die than the life of God, for God’s own life is eternal life and if I have received such life as His, how can I perish? I shall not be slain by sin—the life in me cannot sin because it is born of God. The life in me will throw off the darts of temptation if it is eternal life. There remains nothing for it but to shake off the death which often surrounds it by reason of the old man and to mount up like a bird set free from its cage, singing because of its escape, singing in the joy of life, and winging its happy way upward to the throne of God.

Rejoice then, dear friends, that if you have received Christ, you have eternal life in actual possession at this moment. “Sometimes I don’t feel it,” you say. Do not try to live by feeling. It is the most uncertain thing in the world. You might as well try to live by the barometer. Feeling goes up and down, up and down and changes more often than the moon. It is hard, uncomfortable living. Live by faith, for it is written, “The just shall live by faith.” Your life is a life of trust. Keep to it.

“Ah, but I see so much about me that grieves me.” Thank God it grieves you. If you see sin and it does not grieve you, it is a token of death. But if it grieves you, there is life in you, notwithstanding all the death that surrounds it. You may have seen a spark in the midst of a heap of autumn leaves which are all damp and will not burn, but only smolder and smoke. And yet that spark continues to live and the very smoke from the heap proves it is so. There is one who will not quench the smoking flax, but will fan it till it rises to a flame and then it will devour the leaves which covered it and dry up the dampness which sought to destroy it.

Furthermore, if you believe in Jesus and have received Him, you have gathered a life in which Christ gives us the *victory*, even through His name—life which will rise and rise and rise and conquer all sin. The believer’s inner life must come to absolute perfection and tread every sin beneath its feet. Very different is this from the doctrine that a man who is a child of God may sin as he pleases and yet be saved. That doctrine is of the devil. But this is quite another doctrine and ministers to holiness. The quickened man will not willingly and habitually sin, for His seed remains in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God. The tone and tenor and bearing of his life will be towards holiness and not towards sin—and the Lord who is able to keep him from falling will preserve him to His eternal kingdom and glory and He that has begun a good work in him will perfect it unto the day of Christ.

Our Lord, having thus given us the negative and the positive in our text, tells us that His flesh and blood, or Himself, received into the soul are most efficient nourishment—in it is *satisfaction*. “My flesh is meat *indeed*.” The Greek word is “truly,” or some say, “true meat.” Now that which we eat for the body is not true meat. As George Herbert says, “When you are at your meat, eat a bit and then say, ‘Earth to earth I commit.’” It is a deadly business. It is burying earth in earth and that living grave of earth will be itself buried in earth by-and-by. The eating of material meat is the poor building up of a fabric that must ultimately crumble into nothingness. The meat we eat has all the elements of dissolution about it before we receive it and it only feeds for a short time and therefore it is not meat indeed.

In the matter of mental food, how much there is which is not bread and can never satisfy the mind. There is nothing in the world that can fill a soul to the fullest, but Jesus. Perhaps I address some thinker who has been trying to satisfy his soul by sniffing up the east wind of speculative philosophy. Ah, well, if you swallow a dose of Kant, or Hegel, Schleiermacher, or any one of those gentlemen—if you do not feel as if you had been eating bubbles and bladders, your mental constitution and mine greatly differ. There is nothing in them but gas or vapor less substantial. Why, a man may take down their books—a whole dozen of them—and devour their contents and then say, “What is it? Is it not much ado about nothing? These thoughts are dreams, vacuums, and airy nothings.” All the philosophies that ever were invented could not satisfy a soul. The worst of it is that many do not want to be satisfied. “We,” they say, “would sooner be seekers after truth than finders of it.” They somewhat differ from men of practical common sense who ordinarily would rather have money than earn it and would rather eat their dinners than hunt for them. Still that is their way and if they like it, I suppose they must have it. Every creature after its own order; but if you want to be fed, dear friends, depend upon it, nothing will feed you but Christ. There was a man of great appetite who lived many years ago and he began to feast ravenously. He was such a drinker that I may say of him that he drank up Jordan at a draught, and he was such an eater, that if you heard the story of what was brought to his table, you would be like the Queen of Sheba, utterly astonished and say that the half was not told you. His name was Solomon and he fed his soul with all the arts and sciences and with all the poetries and luxuries of the age. Nor did he refrain from laughter and wantonness. There was not a cup he did not drain, nor a dainty from any land, nor a fruit from any tree of which he did not eat. Yet when he rose up from that abundant banquet, all he had to say was, “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.” I have seen a poor soul feed on Christ in a very humble cottage, upon a bed in a little room where she has lain alone almost all day and all night long, year after year, with many aches and pains and scarcely able to lift her hand to her head—with little but dry bread and a

cup of water—and yet I have seen in that bedridden woman’s pain-worn face a fullness of satisfaction. I have known her speak like one that had not a wish ungratified, nor a grief worth mentioning. I have beheld her when in her sufferings she could scarcely speak and yet her every word was essential poetry when she spoke of *Him*, her best Beloved, who had filled her soul even to overflowing. There is no food *indeed*, no drink *indeed*, for soul and spirit, but that which you find in the incarnate God and in the sacrifice of Christ. O you hungry, come here and eat that which is good and let your soul delight itself in fatness. O you thirsty, come here, for behold the waters are flowing freely and the wines on the lees are ready for you in Christ Jesus. That is what is bound up in feeding upon Jesus. There is satisfaction in Him.

And then there is bound up with it one other matter, namely, *in-dwelling*. I go over the same ground again. The Lord Jesus says, “He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood, dwells in Me and I in him.” When you have eaten bread, it dwells in you and you in it—it goes into you and it is in you—it becomes part of yourself and you live by it and in its strength. It is a part of the fabric in which you dwell. Even so, he that believes in Christ lives in Christ. He does not merely go to Christ, but he enters into Christ. I delight to remember that I am not merely under the shadow of my Lord, but as David in the caverns of Engedi, so does my soul hide herself right away in Jesus. We dwell in Him and are at home. Moreover, He enters into us by our feeding upon Him so that He becomes our life, the spring of our being, the object of our desire, the motive force of our service. We are woven together—Christ warp and ourselves woof—woven together in a living loom and so conjoined that it were hard to tell where *He* ends who has no end and where we begin who are lost in Him. We are less than the least of all saints and yet members of *His* body who is Lord of all.

We must leave the mystery remarking that if we have fed on Christ for ourselves, we have proof of what good meat it is we have fed on and we shall always pray, “Lord, evermore give us this bread.”

III. I need your attention for a few minutes while, in the third place, we consider WHAT REFLECTIONS ARISE OUT OF THIS TRUTH.

I will simply throw them out for you to turn over for yourselves. They occurred to me when I was hearing a brother preach upon a kindred subject. They took hold of my soul. May they prove useful to you.

And the first was this. If I have a life that feeds on Christ, *what a wonderful life it must be*. My bodily life is wonderful, yet it only feeds on the fruits of the earth. My mental life is a marvel, but I know that I can build it up with literature and thought. Above all these I have a life which cannot feed on anything but the flesh and blood of the Son of God. What a life that must be! What a wonderful being a man is when God is in him. I almost reverence the meanest saint when I think of this, for he bears about with him not a Kohinoor, but a gem of life, compared with which the queenly diamond pales into a glittering vanity. O love divine, do You tabernacle in the sons of men! I have been speaking of mysteries, but I ask you to explain which is the greater mystery, the incarnation of God in Christ or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers? They are two wondrous stoops of deity which can only be likened to each other, being each one without other parallel. The spiritual life given to the regenerate must be a life of inconceivable excellence and heavenliness since it can only feed on Christ Himself.

The next thought is, if we have the life that feeds on such meat as this, *how strong it must be*. They say of such-and-such men that they may well be strong, seeing what good food they have. Ay, but see what food we have—how strong we must be. Do we know our own strength? I do not mean our natural strength, for that is weakness, but I mean the strength which lies in the new nature when it has fed on Christ. O brethren, we are strong to do. We are strong to be. We are strong to suffer. And to take an easy illustration of this—the one that occurs to me first—look at how the saints have suffered. Take down “Foxe’s Book of Martyrs.” Read of Marcus Arethusa, stung to death by wasps without a sigh. Think of Blandina tossed on the horns of bulls, exposed in a red-hot iron chair, and yet never flinching. Give up Christ? They never dreamed of such a thing. Think of Lawrence on the gridiron and other innumerable heroes who were made strong because Christ was in them. Ay, and turn to humble men and women over yonder in Smithfield who could clap their hands while every finger burned like a candle and could shout, “None but Christ! None but Christ!” Why, they fed on the flesh and blood of Christ and that made them mighty. They were tortured on the rack like Anne Askew and yet they scorned to yield. Brave

woman! The priests and the friars could not vanquish her. Neither could all the Bishop Bonners in the world burn Christ out of poor Tomkins. When Bonner held the poor man's finger over the candle and said, "How will you like that in every single limb of your body?" Tomkins smiled at the bishop and said that he forgave him the cruelty that he was doing him. Christ in a man makes him a partaker of divine strength. Do you not think, my brethren, that as you are not called to suffer, you ought to lay out your strength in the line of doing, giving, self-denial, and serving Christ by holy living? Certainly you should try to do so and your strength will be found equal to it. You do not know how strong you are, but Paul shall tell you, "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me." Well may you do all things if you have fed on Him who is all and in all.

Then a third reflection crossed my mind. If we have a life that feeds on this, *how immortal it must be*. We have a text to prove that and we have given it to you already—"He that believes on Him has everlasting life." When a man has nothing but bad food, you do not wonder that he dies. It is little marvel that they died by millions in India and China, considering how little nourishment they had during the famine. But if you and I eat Christ, eat the incarnate God and drink His blood, how can we die? What, kill a man that has even a particle of Christ in him! The devil cannot do it—he knows his Master. And what does Christ say? "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." Oh, blessed truth! We live, not only because our life is itself eternal, but because it feeds on eternal meat. We keep on receiving Christ day by day, for we live upon Him. Eating is not a work that we finished 25 years ago, but we continue to feed upon Jesus and therefore we live. Feeding upon Christ does not mean being converted and then saying, "I am safe and have no more need to care." Ah, no. It means beginning to receive Him in conversion and continuing to feed upon Him forevermore. And they who do this may be sure that their life is immortal.

The next thought that struck me was this—if we feed on such meat as this, *how that life must develop*. I do not quite see in myself, and I may say that I do not see in some believers, the full result I should like to see from such food. Has this man been eating such divine food? Let us hear him. He cries, "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me." He is doing Christ's work spasmodically, feebly, sleepily. He does it without joy and is soon weary. Is this all he is going to do? Is this all he is going to be? Oh no, brethren, "It does not yet appear what we shall be." We shall grow. We shall grow. When I hear a man talk about being perfect in the flesh, I hope for the best and trust that he is not willfully lying. At any rate, I do not believe him. I would like to *see* his perfection rather than to hear him talk about it. I have generally found that when a cart needs a bell, it is a dust cart. I never knew the people of the Bank of England ring a bell when they were going through the streets with bullion and I do not think it is likely that a man who has much grace will boast of it. Yet I do believe that we can be developed into something very wonderful. A man may grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord till his conversation is in heaven and he becomes wholly consecrated to the Lord—hating sin and living like Enoch who walked with God. There have been such men and there are such men and women still among us whose lives glitter with the light of God—why should not we be like they are? They are stars in God's firmament and they shine in the glory of the Most High. The Lord grant us that feeding on the divine meat we may develop till the image of Jesus is perfected in us.

And lastly, he who is thus fed, dear friends, *what company he must keep!* "He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood, dwells in Me," says Christ, "and I in him." What heavenly company is this! He goes home at night to his poor family, perhaps, and there is nothing great about his house that you can see—but if your eyes are opened you will see that it is a king's palace—and if you are one of the Lord's and can step inside, you will see that he has "come to the general assembly and church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven and unto God the Judge of all, and unto the spirits of just men made perfect," because he that has Christ in him has heaven around him. All good things are attracted by Christ in man. Put down a little honey and see how wasps and flies and bees come all around it. What is the sweetest honey in the universe? It is Christ—and if you have Christ in you, His name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love Him and they will come where He is. I will tell you—Christ is never without God and he that has Christ has the company of the Father. And Christ is never without the Spirit of God, for the Spirit of God is upon Him and he that has Christ is never without the Spirit. What divine society is this! Our Lord Jesus is never unattended by a retinue of sublime intelligences and

so if Christ is in you, He will give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands lest you dash your foot against a stone. O Prince of the blood royal of heaven. O Peer of God's own kingdom, you are more nearly related to the King of kings than the peers of the realm can be to the Queen, for are you not married to the Prince Imperial? Is He not coming to receive you to Himself, that where He is, you may be, also? If you are feeding on Him, your union with Him is complete. If He is your food, if He is your raiment, if He is your dwelling place, if He is your all in all, I think I may compare you to that angel of whom Milton sang, even Uriel who dwelt in the center of the sun. It is there we live—in the very substance and essence of all things and all things move around us like satellites around a central globe, for we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people inasmuch as we have fed on Christ—and Christ dwells in us and we in Him.

I have not said anything to the unconverted and yet I have meant it all for them. When you spread a dainty feast, you practically invite the family to come and dine. It is the very best way of enticing them. If they are hungry, the meats on the table will make their mouths water and they will long to partake. Oh, my hearers, whoever you may be, if your mouths water after Christ, come and have Him for He is free to every soul that hungers and thirsts after Him.

The Lord give Him to you at once, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 6:41-71.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—260, 820, 761.**

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

BELOVED FRIENDS, By the time that this note is printed, the Special Services at the Tabernacle will be drawing to a close and it will be meet to harrow in the seed with renewed supplication. Shall so much effort be in vain? It cannot be and yet everything depends upon the mighty working of the Spirit of God and therefore we must seek His face if we would see large results. I suggest that every sermon reader should spend a special time in prayer next Lord's Day in pleading for the revival of Evangelical religion.

The Times pronounced the funeral oration of the Evangelical party, but it is not dead, even within the Established church and certainly not among Dissenters. Let us, however, pray that it may exhibit more vigorous life. There is need of such supplication, but it must be presented in faith and with holy persistence. So let it be.

For myself, one word only. I am recovering and rest is restoring mind and heart. Pray for me.

Yours to serve always,

C. H. SPURGEON,

Mentone, February 20, 1879.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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